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SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT, AND NOT JUST EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE, IS NEEDED
IN DARFUR, SAYS REHABILITATION AND RESETTLEMENT COMMISSIONER

¶1. (SBU) On February 23, Ibrahim Musa Madibbo, Chairman of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority's Rehabilitation and Resettlement Commission, presented his institution's work to CDA Fernandez. The stack of books in Arabic included: a study documenting the root causes of the conflict in Darfur; an analysis of IDP camps and proposed areas for voluntary return; and three separate development studies on farming, water and sanitation, and schools. Most startling is a seemingly precise accounting of hundreds of Darfur villages destroyed during the years of the violence.

¶2. (SBU) Madibbo emphasized that much of his Commission's work is groundbreaking in its detail, scope, and timing. Now that the preliminary studies have been completed, the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Commission will continue to seek funding for the implementation of its projects, stated Madibbo. Although the Arab League, the Islamic Development Bank, and the Government of Saudi Arabia have all pledged significant funding on numerous occasions, none of these institutions and states has delivered on its promises.

¶3. (SBU) As an example of his work, Madibbo said his Commission has advocated for the voluntary return of IDPs to a limited number of rural villages. Rather than return to the over two thousand very small villages scattered throughout all Darfur, IDPs should return to larger, rural towns where they will receive better protection, services, and infrastructure. Madibbo stated that this solution for voluntary return could be considered a compromise between the forced urbanization of the IDP camps and the unrealistic notion that all of the IDPs will return to their original, remote, vulnerable, and almost completely destroyed homelands. Other examples of the Commission's work include: a proposal for aiding recent immigrants from West Africa to return to their countries of origin; agricultural projects for Darfur's farmers (which comprise over 80% of Darfur's population;) and plans for the largest water project in the history of Darfur.

¶4. (SBU) Madibbo stated that now is the time to start moving from disaster relief to development. CDA Fernandez replied that the U.S. would like to eventually move in that direction in Darfur, but that in order for this to occur the Government of Sudan (and especially the Humanitarian Affairs Commission) must demonstrate that it is willing to work with the U.S. as a partner. The GoS looks at international development and humanitarian assistance as a blank check and complains when there is accountability and oversight of aid and development programs. CDA Fernandez stated that the arrival of the new USAID Director in Sudan will present the opportunity to raise the issue of development programs with senior GOS officials again but the regime needs to change its attitude towards the international community and the US if it expects more partnership.

¶5. (SBU) Madibbo responded that there are certain officials within

the GoS who are more problematic than others. Madibbo then added that he would personally discuss this with senior GoS officials such as Vice President Ali Osman Taha (who he claimed holds the humanitarian and development portfolio in Darfur, while Nafie Ali Nafie remains in charge of Darfur negotiations.) CDA Fernandez ended the meeting by asking Madibbo to brainstorm about a non-controversial development pilot project that would test the GOS's openness to a U.S. partnership and build trust between the U.S. and GoS. Madibbo agreed to think about the issue and mentioned the devastated Fur area of Shattay as a possibility. He then concluded by stating that the potential ICC arrest warrant for President Bashir remains a problem for the GOS, and "if there is a solution you can offer, it would change our relationship 100%."

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Madibbo's Rehabilitation and Resettlement Commission appears to be much further along in its work compared to other TDRA commissions. (NOTE: The Compensation Commission and Land Commission, for example, have only begun their preliminary studies and are far away from producing or recommendations for moving forward. END NOTE.) The interests of both the GOS and the U.S. could potentially overlap in Darfur's development, and Madibbo's work might provide a foundation for such cooperation. However, the one caveat and major source of frustration remains that until the HAC and GOS stop their harassment and obstruction of INGOs working in Darfur, such a partnership will be impossible. While development and painful tradeoffs about returns, land, and IDPs will eventually have to be addressed as part of a comprehensive solution to Darfur, this remains a regime that cannot be trusted on such sensitive issues.

FERNANDEZ